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ANNUAL PREDATOR MANAGEMENT REPORT
1995

Seedskaadee National Wildlife Refuge
Green River, Wyoming

U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service
Region 6

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INTRODUCTION

Seedsdakee NWR initiated its eighth consecutive year of predator management in June of 1995. The purpose of this management is to selectively remove waterfowl nest predators in order to increase waterfowl nesting success and to meet the refuge's waterfowl production objectives. A predator management and duck nesting success study was initiated in 1987. This was superseded by a predator management plan in 1991. Predator management is currently conducted under the guidelines of the plan. In general, the guidelines allow trapping of three predator species within the vicinity of refuge wetlands during the waterfowl nesting season. Targeted predator species include the striped skunk (*Mephitis mephitis*), raccoon (*Procyon lotor*), and red fox (*Vulpes vulpes*).

METHODS

Refuge personnel conducted trapping from April 19th to June 30th. Trapping was conducted on the Hawley, Lower Hawley and the Dunkle units. The Hawley unit was given the highest priority and effort due to the amount of desirable nesting habitat. 220 Conibear cubby sets baited with rough fish and cat food were used primarily for capturing striped skunks and raccoons. The rough fish were obtained from the Wyoming Game and Fish Department. Leghold sets baited with commercial red fox lures and urine were used to capture red fox. A maximum of 24 conibear sets and 13 leghold sets were used at one time during the trapping season. The average number of sets for one night was 24 conibear sets and 13 leghold sets.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A total of 26 targeted nest predators were removed in approximately 2345 trap nights. Table 1 compares the yearly capture and trap night effort of species caught since the inception of the predator management program. The species composition of the take amounted to 12 striped skunk, 7 raccoon, and 7 red fox. Eight black-billed magpies (*Pica pica*) which are non-targeted nest predators were killed in conibear traps.

Total trap nights in FY 95 were significantly lower due to a late wet spring. Animals caught versus trap night effort was about average when compared with other years when FY 95 figures are extrapolated. Manpower and budget limitations will result in an even shorter trapping season for 1996 and into the future. **Trapping will only be conducted from May 1 through June 30.**

A possible explanation for the low number of red fox caught this year could be the resurgence of coyotes in the area. Two years ago a no fly coyote zone was established with Animal Damage Control (ADC). ADC agreed not to shoot or trap coyotes in a given area bordering the refuge. Coyotes were seen on numerous occasions in the wetland units this year. They may have displaced some of the

fox pairs using the refuge.

Table 1. Numbers of Target Species Trapped and Numbers of Trap Nights Since Inception of Predator Management Plan, Seedskadee NWR Wetland Units.

Year	Skunk	Raccoon	Red Fox	Total	Trap Nights
1987	0	0	0	0	0
1988	64	17	16	97	5700
1989	25	21	19	65	5900
1990	29	10	24	63	5300
1991	30	17	43	90	4500
1992	26	6	15	47	4500
1993	13	19	21	53	4710
1994	13	11	10	34	3570
1995	12	7	7	26	2345

Recommendations:

1. Traps should be tagged with refuge identification.
2. Conibears should be secured to the boxes and placement of all traps should be out of the public's view. This will help prevent trap loss and negative public reaction.
3. Leghold traps must be properly boiled, dyed, waxed and stored throughout the entire year. This includes during the trapping season and after.
4. Trapping supplies should be ordered in the fall as they are more readily available during that time.
5. All non-targeted animals that are caught should be released back into similar habitat where trapping operations are not being conducted. All efforts should be made to avoid catching non-targeted animals.